

FAITH

A way of being open

To have faith in God is to revive what is concealed.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Archbishop Jean Marie Lustiger speaks of discovering God by situating ourselves differently in relation to ourselves, the world and "the One [we] do not know". This suggests a radical kind of openness, a new kind of appreciating - not seeing different things but seeing things differently. Can you stay with this kind of openness - and wait? What's it like not having God at your disposal? This act of waiting - this readiness to admit we do not see - may in turn be itself revelatory.

Faith is the fundamental openness of heart, the basic readiness to see and hear what is really there, the devotion to being which refuses to tamper with reality, no matter how frightening or costly it appears to be... [This] basic disposition to accept the truth is what enables the person... to be "interiorly taught by God".

Sandra Schneiders

Unless [our faith] can make its harsh and saving sense out of what we experience here and now, it is a useless fairytale.

Philip Toynebee

This being open to reality is quite rigorous for us. It means allowing us to be affected by what we open ourselves to, but at the same time it allows us "to transcend the unreality with which we surround ourselves", (Ernst Kasemann) Try and take time each day, and as simply and courageously as you can, ask yourself.' What is going on in my life at present? What am I carrying or facing?

The invitation is not, in the first instance, to change it, or fix it up but to see it and begin to wake up to its saving (how it offers life and freedom) and revelatory aspect.

The task is to have "a long, loving look at the real". This calls out from us honesty, faithfulness or staying with the real, and willingness to be led by the grace which is at the heart of the real.

We shall rescue the entombed heart. We shall bring it to the surface, to the light and air. We shall nurse it and listen respectfully to its story.

Michael Leuing

Philip Carter is a retired Anglican Priest. He was the inaugural president of the Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction (AECSD). He ran the Julian Centre in Adelaide, an independent and ecumenical centre for spirituality, from 1997-2009.

Contact: juliancentre@gmail.com